



Population Health Unit

Media Release

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For immediate release:

Influenza Update

Much of the province is in the midst of the flu season. The flu season has started over the past two weeks in northern Saskatchewan which is later than usual this year.

Dr. James Irvine, Medical Health Officer for northern Saskatchewan, says that in some communities there are a lot of people going to the health center. "Having information about influenza can help people manage their illness at home and to know when it is important to be seen by your health practitioner."

Here is some information on influenza, how to reduce your chance of getting flu and what to do about it if you have the flu. Not everyone who has the flu needs to go to the health center:

Influenza is a viral illness that is different from a cold. The flu symptoms usually include the sudden appearance of high fever, cough and muscle aches. Other common symptoms can be headache, chills, sore throat, and a runny nose. If you are having mainly a runny nose and cough, it is likely a cold and there is no need to see the doctor. Sometimes flu, especially in children may also produce a stomach ache, diarrhea or vomiting. Most people recover from the flu in 7 to 10 days.

The best way to help reduce your risk of getting the flu is to get a flu shot, wash your hands often, cough and sneeze into your arm not your hand, and to clean objects that many people

touch regularly. The types of influenza we are presently seeing around northern Saskatchewan, are the types for which this year's flu vaccine will help to prevent.

If you do get the flu, generally it is best to treat symptoms with rest; drinking fluids like water, weak tea, or thin soup; and taking medicines like acetaminophen or ibuprofen to reduce fever or aches. Antibiotics like penicillin are not helpful except for certain situations.

People with the flu are advised to stay at home to help reduce the spread to others at work or at school.

Some individuals may be at more of a risk for complications of the flu or may have a greater chance of getting sicker. This includes:

- people with health conditions, such as:
 - Cancer especially if they are undergoing cancer treatments
 - Diabetes
 - heart disease
 - lung disease
 - marked obesity
- people 65 years and older
- people who live in nursing homes or other long-term care facilities
- children under 5 years of age
- pregnant women

People in these categories should be seen by their health provider if they have a high fever. People with increasing or persisting short of breath, chest pain, blue lips, stiff neck, confusion or drowsiness or children under the age of 3 months with a fever, should be seen at the clinic or hospital.

For most people with the flu, it's good to stay at home, get plenty of rest, take some acetaminophen or ibuprofen for fever or aches and pains and drink fluids.

For more information, call the Health Line at 811 or see:

<https://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/health/diseases-and-conditions/influenza>